

Senator VITTER may be retiring from his post in this Chamber, but we know he will continue to look for ways to serve the State he loves so much. Today we join with his team and his family in recognizing his many years of service. I know each of us is looking forward to seeing what else our colleague is able to achieve on behalf of Louisiana in the years to come.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, if the majority leader will yield for one moment, I want to thank the majority leader for his very kind words. Serving in the Senate for two terms has been the highest honor of my professional career. I have enjoyed it so much and have been honored by the relationship with all of my colleagues, certainly including the majority leader. I will have a few more reflections next Monday, but I sincerely thank him and also congratulate him for getting the Senate, particularly in the past 2 years, back to working order and some of its best practices. Not as a Member but as a cheerleader on the outside, I will be very much looking forward to even greater successes this coming Congress.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank my colleague.

I have one more statement, and then I will be through.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the House passed the 21st Century Cures bill with overwhelming bipartisan support, and I hope to see the same in the Senate. The medical innovation bill is one that can have a substantial impact for families across our country. It supports medical research, including promoting regenerative medicine. It provides real funding to help combat the prescription opioid epidemic that swept our Nation, particularly in places such as my home State of Kentucky. It improves mental health programs, among other bipartisan priorities.

I thank Senator ALEXANDER, chairman of the HELP Committee, for his tireless work in driving this critical legislation forward. We should also thank Senator HATCH, who worked with our Finance colleagues on a significant number of Medicare provisions in the package to protect care for America's seniors. I would like to note the great work by Senator CORNYN and Senator CASSIDY to incorporate key mental health reforms into the Cures legislation.

Let's work together to send it to the President's desk as soon as possible.

IRAN SANCTIONS EXTENSION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today we will have a chance to pass the Iran sanctions extension legislation that passed the House by a large margin.

Given Iran's continued pattern of aggression and the country's persistent

efforts to expand its sphere of influence across the region, preserving these sanctions is critical. This is even more important given how the current administration has been held hostage by Iran's threats to withdraw from the nuclear agreement and how it has ignored Iran's overall efforts to upset the balance of power in the greater Middle East.

The authorities extended by this legislation give us some of the tools needed to, if necessary, impose sanctions to hold the regime to account and to keep the American people safer. Next year I expect the new administration and new Congress will undertake a total review of our overall Iran policy. These authorities should remain in place as we address how best to deal with the Iranian missile test, their support for Hezbollah, and their support for the Syrian regime.

I urge all Senators to support this legislation later today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at times it seems that Democrats and Republicans in the Senate don't agree on very much, but the one thing we all agree on without any exception is this: Our colleague BARBARA MIKULSKI of Maryland can turn a phrase better than anyone else. It is one of her many gifts. Just listen to some of the memorable lines we have heard her utter.

Running for her first term in the Senate, Barbara said:

I might be short, but I won't be overlooked.

Just prior to the 2013 government shutdown, she told Senate Republicans:

You can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't be the magic dragon that blows the Affordable Care Act away.

Earlier this year, she spoke of the Zika virus as follows:

The mosquitoes are coming. The mosquitoes are already here. You can't build a fence to keep them out, and the mosquitoes won't pay for it. The mosquitoes are here—this is not an Obama fantasy.

My personal favorite was something she said at a welcome reception for the 1986 class. We gathered in the Russell Building, and it was a festive occasion for Democrats. We had many new Democrats. It was a huge class—Daschle, SHELBY, Breaux, GRAHAM, Conrad, and Fowler. There were many Democratic Senators, but the day was stolen by BARBARA MIKULSKI. We were all asked to say a word. About her opponent, she stood and said: "I may be short, but it sure wasn't hard for me to slam dunk Linda Chavez," her opponent.

It is safe to say that with that quip, BARBARA immediately hit it off with all the Members of the Senate class.

From the moment she first set foot in the Senate, Senator MIKULSKI was determined to be herself—honest, disciplined, principled, undaunted, with an incredible wit and a fierce love of Maryland.

You will not find a Member of this body more devoted to her circumstances—and we will talk about those in a little bit—devoted to her constituents and her State than Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. She served the State of Maryland for more than 50 years. A graduate of Mount Saint Agnes College and the University of Maryland, she made her name as a social worker and a political activist.

Her grandparents are well known, especially her grandmother. They ran a bakery. I have heard her talk about that bakery so many times, how the people in the neighborhood would come and wait for that bakery to open. Her grandparents went there very early, as bakers do. She speaks with nostalgia, warmth, and love of her grandparents.

Her own parents ran a little grocery store next to a steel mill. They would get there early in the morning, and the steelworkers would come and get their lunches and sometimes their breakfasts in that grocery store. Her parents were part of her life, as were her grandparents. She is so proud of them.

In 1966 the Baltimore City Council proposed building a large highway through the center of the city of Baltimore. There was a downside to the plan: It would have razed entire neighborhoods, African-American neighborhoods and especially immigrant neighborhoods. They would have to leave their homes.

The city's leaders, political bosses, and, of course, the wealthy real estate interests and many others—the power brokers of the State of Maryland, the city of Baltimore—knew this was a done deal, but the power brokers didn't count on a young social worker named MIKULSKI to fight for these families. It was her first political activism, and activism it was. It was her alone. Because of her magnetism, her warmth, and her ability to organize, she organized an effort to stop the highway. Everyone said it couldn't be done, but no one bothered to tell BARBARA. She rallied the citizens of Baltimore in opposing the highway, and what a rally it was—not one rally, not two, but many of them until it was determined that she had won and the power brokers had lost. These people got to keep their homes, and today there is no superhighway towering over the center of Baltimore. People remember BARBARA MIKULSKI for that.

BARBARA's fight against the highway made her a hero in Baltimore and propelled her to the city council in 1971. In 1976 BARBARA MIKULSKI fought her way to the Congress of the United States as a Member of the House of Representatives. After five terms in the House, BARBARA MIKULSKI ran for a seat in the Senate, in the one I just told you about. She slam-dunked her opponent,